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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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SUBJECT: "SHORTCUTS IN HOUSEWORK." Information from rural electrification experts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Time is short. Time is precious. Time counts to your country these days more than ever before. The more time you save on your own work, the more time you have to work for your country.

So today let's consider short-cuts and time-savers in housework. Let's consider especially short-cuts in using electric equipment. So many people think once they own some of these electric labor-savers, that that's all there is to it. They think electric irons and vacuum cleaners, and washers just save time automatically. Well, they do--up to a point. But there are fast ways and slow ways of using electric equipment.

Take your electric iron, for example. Take any iron, for that matter. Saving time with any iron begins at the clothesline. When you hang up a piece, shake the wrinkles out. Hang like pieces together--sheets with sheets, towels with towels, and so on. And then when you take the clothes from the line, fold them and place them in order. This saves time in sorting.

Keep like pieces together when you dampen your wash, and roll it up for ironing. One kind of piece needs a hot iron and another needs a cooler iron. After ironing a tablecloth, say, you don't want to wait for the iron to cool to press rayon, and then wait again for it to heat up to press a sheet or pillowcase. Save time by arranging the clothes so that you iron all rayon and silk fabrics first, then the cottons, and last of all the linins, so that all fabrics requiring the same kind of heat are ironed together.

Here are a couple of short-cuts in sprinkling clothes. To get clothes properly damp for ironing in a hurry, sprinkle with warm water instead of cold, for

warm water spreads through the fabric faster than cold. A sprinkling bottle does a faster and more even job than your hand. A whisk broom dipped in water is another time-saver for sprinkling.

Dish towels and bath towels hung straight on the line don't need any ironing. The same goes for sheets and other flat pieces. Some women iron the top hem of sheets to make them look neater on the bed, and leave the rest "rough dried."

And last--a mild scolding to any homemaker who punishes herself with a low ironing board that makes ironing a slow back-breaking job. And more scolding to the woman who walks way across the room to get each new piece to iron, or who makes a separate search for every hanger she needs as she irons dresses or blouses. These are ways of wasting precious time. One more point to help you save time in ironing. Be sure you have a good light on your ironing board. That makes for better, faster, and more comfortable ironing. And try to have your ironing board in a cool and well ventilated place, especially in summer. You'll iron faster if you keep cool.

So much for ironing short-cuts. Now for some time-savers in using the vacuum cleaner. The cleaning job will go much faster if you use your cleaner in a systematic way--that is, always follow exactly the same route over rugs, furniture and curtains--instead of doing it differently each time, stopping to wonder what to go after next, or worse, forgetting whether you cleaned this piece or that. If you keep to a routine, you always know. And you move quickly from one thing to the next with out even thinking about it. Remember, too, that frequent cleaning saves time and also saves your floors, rugs and furniture. Frequent cleaning saves the rug from the cutting, grinding effect of dirt and grit, and destroys any possible danger from moths who lay their eggs between today and tomorrow. Another way to save time is to keep your cleaner where you can get at it easily--at some central place in the house. If your vacuum cleaner has attachments, do make good use of them. Read in the instruction book that came with the cleaner the best way to use each attachment if you aren't familiar with it. And then practice until you can use it quickly and

easily. Those attachments can save you plenty of time. You can keep mattresses, and draperies, walls, books, upholstered furniture and many other articles clean by using them properly.

Now just a point or two about saving time with your refrigerator. A good refrigerator that holds a constant even temperature can help you save time with baked foods. You don't have to mix up a new batch of dough whenever you want cookies, or rolls, or pie, or even some kinds of cake. Make twice or three times your recipe and keep the dough in the refrigerator to use as you need it. But be careful to wrap batter in wax paper or to cover it well to keep it from drying out in the dry cold air of the refrigerator. Another tip. You can wash and prepare fresh vegetables for cooking before putting them away in the refrigerator. Peas, green beans and other vegetables, fixed ready for cooking, will keep crisp and fresh in a jar with a tight lid, or in wax paper.

Time is short. Time is precious. Time counts to your country. Take short-cuts whenever you can in doing housework these days to save time for helping your country.